

Carr House
165 East D Street
Benicia
Solano County
California

HABS No. CA-2052

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PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CARR HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2052

Location: 165 East "D" Street, Benicia, Solano County, California.

USGS Benicia Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.573910.4211140.

Present Owner: George Hills, 620 West "K" Street, Benicia, California 94510

Present Occupant: Ray Merch.

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: The Carr House, one of the few masonry buildings in Benicia, was probably constructed in the 1870s. The brick shell is a sober vernacular structure. Much of the trim, including the barge boards, front door and interior woodwork, is more fanciful and is probably due to a somewhat later remodeling. Lying partly under the building is a vaulted brick cistern.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Probably in the 1870s. In the 1880-81 city assessment rolls there is a listing of the property with an assessed valuation of improvements of \$600. The 1919 assessment book for the city includes an estimated age of 40 years, thus dating construction to the late 1870s.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Carr House stands on the eastern 50' of lot 2, block 13 in the original plat of Benicia. The following is taken from the Solano County deed records:

1868 Book 2, p. 13, June 1, 1868.
Trustees of the City of Benicia to Richard and Sarah Carr.

1901 Book 141, p. 432, January 16, 1901.
Annie Carr Poor to Manuel M. Fraga.

1904 Book 155, p. 260, March 8, 1904.
M. Fraga to J. Guibbine.

1972 Book 1734, p. 291, instrument no. 3732, February 2, 1972.

Arthur Giubbini to George R. Hills.

4. Original plans and construction: The original structure was apparently the basic brick rectangle with a small L in the rear, probably a shed-roofed frame room housing the kitchen. This disposition is seen on the 1886, 1891, and 1899 Sanborn maps.
5. Alterations and additions: The present frame rear construction was completed by 1919, as it appears on the sketch plan of the 1919 Benicia assessment book. The rear portion of the gable roof of the brick section, now covered by the roof of the addition, shows this change. The nailing boards were left, but the shingles were removed when the roof of the frame addition was built over it. When this addition was made, part of the rear wall was removed to allow room to build a new flue for the kitchen stove and to provide room for a cabinet opening into the kitchen and dining room in the space next to the flue. Finally, at a still later date, the rear center section of the frame addition, which was originally an open porch, was filled in using an old window, perhaps one salvaged from the original brick rear wall of the building.

The decorative bargeboards, front door, and interior wood trim probably all date to a renovation in the late 19th century, perhaps at the time the frame addition was constructed. This door and other ornamental woodwork were probably ordered from stock at a local lumberyard. The doorway, for example, is found in a large number of Bay Area buildings [see, for example, Carol Olwell and Judith Lynch Waldhorn's A Gift to the Street (San Francisco, 1976), p. 11]. A porch was apparently also added at that time but has since been removed.

The eastern two rooms of the original brick structure were originally heated by stoves opening into a chimney flue running between the two rooms. The remains of the lower part of this chimney are visible in the basement. This flue would have run through the center of the room upstairs making it likely that this room was originally only used for storage. How the two western rooms were heated is not known.

Prepared by: Robert Bruegmann
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
August, 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This brick house is typical of the small residence in Benicia of the late nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The one-and-a-half-story brick portion of the house is 28'-4" across the three-bay front by 25'-5" deep. The one-story frame addition on the rear measures 28'-4" by 18'-3" deep.
2. Foundation: Common bond brick with wood piers in center.
3. Walls: The front portion of the house is red brick laid in common bond and the rear addition is wood siding with corner boards, sill band and vertical wood siding below sill.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick load-bearing walls and frame construction. Two metal tie rods extend through the brick portion of the house from east to west.
5. Porches: There are five wooden steps at the front door with a simple wooden handrail each side. A wooden porch and deck are at the rear door. A bulkhead on the east side of the house near the center has eight wooden steps and wooden doors.
6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney near the rear of the house with projecting bricks around the top. A metal flue out of the cellar runs up the face of the west wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doorway in the center of the brick structure has wooden surrounds, wood sill and threshold and a wooden panel door. The door has a glass panel at the top framed with pilaster molding on the sides and a pediment at the top. There is a wood sill under the glass panel with a scroll underneath the sill. The deeply recessed wood panels have a fan carved in one panel and wooden circles in the other panel. A bell is in the center rail under the glass. Above the door is a one-light transom window.

The rear door from the kitchen onto the enclosed porch is wood panel with fourteen glass panels in the upper portion, consisting of one large center panel flanked by five small lights on each side, and a small light above and below the center panel. The door has a wood sill, wood surrounds and a wood threshold. A wood frame screen door at the enclosed porch has a wood panel in the lower portion and a screened transom panel above. The door to the cellar is wood panel with a screen panel in the upper portion. All doors are mortise-and-tenon.

- b. Windows and shutters: There are two windows in the cellar that are boarded up. The metal flue projects through one. Wooden, double-hung windows on the first floor have one-over-one-light sashes. Wooden, single-hung windows on the second floor have six-over-six-light sashes. Hinges are on the frames for shutters, but shutters have been removed. There is a flat brick arch over the windows. Windows in the frame addition have brackets and a molded apron under the sill.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof over the brick portion of the house and a hip roof on the rear frame addition. Covering is asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The boxed cornice has a built-in gutter. There is a decorative scalloped bargeboard on the gable ends. A frieze extends around the frame addition with a molding at the bottom of the frieze and a crown molding at the soffit.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: The dirt-floored cellar is under the rear portion of the brick structure and consists of two rooms. It is entered by a bulkhead on the east side. A wooden stairway to the first floor has been blocked off at the upper level. Brick steps that formerly led to the cellar from the rear lead into the crawl space under the frame addition. The cellar houses the water heater and floor furnace.

- b. First floor: The brick portion has a center hall with two rooms on each side. The two rooms at the west side are joined by an arched opening. In the frame addition are two large rooms with small rooms, such as bath and pantry, across the rear.
 - c. Second floor: The attic on the second floor has two rooms.
- 2. Stairways: The open-string narrow wooden stair in the center hall is a winder at the bottom, extending as a straight run up to the second floor. There is simple wood banister with two spindle balusters per tread.
 - 3. Flooring: Flooring on the first floor is wood covered with rugs. The kitchen and pantry are covered with linoleum. Flooring on the second floor is wide wood planks.
 - 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings on both floors are plaster, some wallpapered and painted. There is a vertical wood wainscoting in the kitchen and pantry. Some walls in the bath are painted gypsum board. There is a plaster arch near the center of the central hall.
 - 5. Doorways and doors: Doorways on the first floor have wood surrounds and trim with bull's-eye corner blocks and plinth blocks. The doors are wood panel and have wooden thresholds. Some doors have been removed from the openings. Doorways on the second floor have wood surrounds, wood thresholds and wood panel doors.
 - 6. Decorative features: Window trim is fluted with bull's-eye corner blocks. There is a garlanded picture molding in the living and dining rooms and a simple picture molding in the two first-floor bedrooms. Wide baseboards on the first floor have a molding at the top. There is a built-in cupboard between the kitchen and dining room. The upper portion has wood-framed glass doors and three shelves. On the dining room side are three drawers below the glass doors. Trim is fluted to match the door and window trim and has plinth blocks and bull's-eye corner blocks. The double opening between the living and dining rooms has a decorative wood screen forming an arch.
 - 7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Heating is by a floor furnace in the central hall.
 - b. Lighting: Modern lighting fixtures.
 - c. Plumbing: Plumbing is modern, with an early twentieth-century cast-iron footed bathtub.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south on the north side of the street in a residential neighborhood. The land across the street is vacant, affording a view of the Carquinez Straits. There are several large trees around the house. A badly neglected garden covers the lot to the east, enclosed by a picket fence. The rear yard is enclosed by a wooden fence.
2. Outbuildings: There is a wooden board and batten storage building behind the house in fair shape. It has a gable roof with asphalt roofing, wooden floor, four windows and a door. There are three dilapidated wooden sheds to the east of the house in poor condition. A garage at the southwest corner of the site straddles the property line and is shared with the house next door to the west. The flat-roofed, wooden building is in poor condition. There is a vaulted brick cistern, partly under the house, near the northwest corner of the house. A rock well is in the east garden.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings Survey
August, 1976

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

Photograph of the house taken probably about 1900, showing the house with a woman standing on the porch, entitled "Tillie at Home."
Collection of the current owners of the house, Mr. and Mrs. George Hills of Benicia. Included here as HABS No. CA-2052-4.

B. Unpublished Sources:

Assessment Records for the City of Benicia, State Capitol Building, Benicia.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with Exxon Company, U.S.A. (a division of Exxon Corporation) and the Benicia Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief

of H.A.B.S., the project was completed during the summer of 1976 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Benicia, California, by John P. White (Assistant Professor, Texas Tech University), Project Historian; Kenneth Payson (Cornell University), Architect; and student assistant architects Scott Barnard (University of Pennsylvania); James L. Cook (Texas Tech University); and Gary A. Statkus (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign). The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland in the HABS Washington office in January, 1981.